

February Niensens Up For HBO; WTBS, CBN Slip; USA Perking

By TOM BIERBAUM

Hollywood, April 9. Home Box Office has earned a welcome set of upbeat Niensens in February, while WTBS, Christian Broadcasting Network's CBN service and The Nashville Network sustained losses and the USA Network numbers kept going up.

In early first-quarter returns on the three services measured quarterly, the Nickelodeon kiddie service attracted exceptional ratings increases, while MTV and ESPN equaled their fairly unimpressive fourth-quarter averages.

February standings, in order, for the cable services measured monthly by Nielsen, in the 7 a.m.-1 a.m. breakout, are: WTBS, a 2.5 rating (down 14% compared to February 1984); USA, 1.3 (up 30%); CBN, 1.1 (down 27%); Nashville Network, 0.5 9 a.m.-3 a.m. (down 17%).

The Lifetime service's ratings were not available because Nielsen and Lifetime are attempting to modify the format of that service's report.

Turner Not Included

Cable News Network and Headline News are no longer measurable, since Turner Broadcasting System has opted to combine their ratings. In February, their combined 6 a.m.-2 a.m. result was an impressive 0.8, no better than CNN managed on its own in January.

Payable's HBO scored its best primetime rating (8.7, up 6%) and its highest 7 a.m.-1 a.m. score (4.4, down 2%) in six months, and topped year-ago primetime levels for the first time in that half-year.

Ad-supported frontrunner WTBS slipped to its worst primetime average in 14 months, but also grabbed its highest 7 a.m.-1 a.m. rating in six months.

USA Gains

USA continues to register gains compared to year-ago levels, and equaled its highest 7 a.m.-1 a.m. average ever.

CBN was unable to reverse its recent losses in year-ago comparisons, but it managed to equal its highest primetime average in the last 11 months.

It was generally a downbeat month for The Nashville Network, as it equaled its lowest 9 a.m.-3 a.m. rating in eight months.

Nickelodeon will finish the first quarter with a 1.0 rating average (up 67%) for its 7 a.m.-9 p.m. cablecast day. That represents a meteoric ratings rise for a service that hadn't reported anything higher than a 0.6 before the fourth quarter of '84, when it shot up to a 0.8.

MTV avoided further losses, but was unable to improve on the 0.9 24-hour rating (down 18%) it fell to in the fourth quarter, which continues to rank as the service's lowest rating to date.

ESPN finished the quarter with a 0.8 rating (down 11%) in 7 a.m.-1 a.m. figures, equaling the service's second-lowest-rated quarter so far, and maintaining its fourth-quarter audience level.

The 10 highest-rated series, in order, on ad-supported cable in February were: "Academy Award Theatre" (WTBS) a 5.8 rating; "World Championship Sports"

(WTBS) 5.3; "Sunday Sports" (WTBS) 5.1; Sunday "Pro Wrestling" (USA) 5.0; "Wagon Train" (WTBS) 4.6; "Sunday Afternoon Movies" (WTBS) 4.4; Tuesday "Pro Wrestling" (USA) 4.2; "Andy Griffith" (WTBS) 4.1; and "The Monroes" (CBN) tied with "Saturday Afternoon Movies" (WTBS) 4.0.

All ratings are measured against only those homes that receive the service being measured.

Penetration Levels

Current penetration levels are: ESPN, 42% of the country's tv homes; WTBS 40%; CNN 38%; USA 35%; CBN 33%; MTV 30%; Nickelodeon 29%; Nashville Network 26%; HBO 25%; Weather Channel 20%; and Headline News 18%.

Nashville Network says it has the fastest-growing penetration level, since it can boast a 65% increase in the number of homes available, compared to February 1984.

The 10 highest-rated programs carried in primetime by HBO in February were: "Lassiter" a 19.3 rating, 28 share; Bramble-Mancini boxing 18.7/26; "48 Hours" 18.5/25; "Blame It On Rio" 17.9/26; the made-for-HBO pic "Finnegan Begin Again" 17.0/21; "D.C. Cab" 15.9/21; and Eddie Murphy spec 14.0/19; another showing of "D.C. Cab" 13.5/19; a child-molestation episode of the made-for "America Undercover" series; and episode of the made-for "Hitchhiker" series 12.7/19, tied with "Blame It On Rio," 12.7/16.

The March HBO primetime results are also in, and they show these standings: "Christine" 19.8/30; "Splash" 19.2/29; "Unfaithfully Yours" 18.9/26; another showing of "Splash" 18.5/26; Holmes-Bey boxing 18.0/27; another showing of "Splash" 16.8/22; "Purple Hearts" 16.7/26; the made-for-pay pic "Forbidden" 15.6/21; an episode of "Hitchhiker" 15.1/22; and "Harry And Son" 14.7/19.

A total of 12 made-for-HBO programs have showed up in the top-10 standings during the first three months of '85.

Among the ad-supported services, February's primetime standings were: WTBS 2.7 (down 16%); USA 1.7 (up 55%); CBN 1.3 (down 13%); Nashville Network 0.8 (down 20%). Apparently both CNN and Headline News would have landed near the bottom of the list, since their combined average was a 0.9.

'All About Us'

(Continued from page 47)

beginning of July," confirmed Dan Enright, cofounder of B&E and exec producer of the new show, slated as part of the LBS Communications "Inday" programming block, which debuts in September.

Project startup of this kind is unusual for B&E, best known for gameshows such as "Tic Tac Dough" and "Joker's Wild," because of the size of the production staff involved.

A gameshow normally requires fewer than 10 fulltimers to handle production duties, while for "All," Enright anticipates hiring 13 segment producers, four tape crews, eight videotape editors, four production assistants and a support clerical staff in the new few months, a shopping list he believes will total 53 bodies.

Reason for the large staff has to do with the vast appetite "All" will have for segment material. The strip series will require eight segments a day (40 per week), 45 seconds to three minutes in length, for the entire production run.

First season will consist of either 25-26 new episodes, or 19 new

shows and the remainder, re-edited composites from the original shows, all hinging on an option LBS Communications will exercise in the 12-14th week of production.

Assuming LBS picks the latter option, Enright estimated minimum production costs for the first season at \$2,250,000. A full 26 weeks would require an outlay of around \$2,730,000, he said.

Syndication Value

Show will feature human-interest stories from a particular point of view, per Enright, who's hoping the result will be a product which will have a potential value in syndication down the line.

"Basically, whatever we do in the show must move the viewer emotionally," he declared, though he also reminded that he will be looking for a certain timelessness in the material. "You don't want to date it."

Enright feels the large number of segment producers he expects to hire are warranted by the nature of the show, which primarily will be shot on location.

"The shows are all remote except for the lead-ins and lead-outs," he explained.

Ron Hendren has been signed to host, and in addition to production personnel, B&E is looking to pick up five narrators for voiceover duties on the various segs.

In addition, B&E will be pacting with production houses in New York, San Francisco and Chicago for stringer videotape crews. However, all segment producers will be based here.

At the present time, regular B&E staffers have been assigned to begin the hiring process and work up story ideas in anticipation of the July startup, and Enright said a producer for the series is expected to be picked shortly.

CBS Stocks Up

(Continued from page 70)

hour Lorimar film based on the book of the same name, rolls in May, with Jerry Thorpe, director. Also to start in May: "Just Another Missing Kid," tv film from Major H. Prods., and "Switch," four-hour film from Herb Brodtkin's Titus Prods., from a John Gay script.

Collins' Sins

Currently in production is the four-hour "Alice In Wonderland," while "Sins," six-hour mini starring Joan Collins, begins shooting April 15. It's from New World TV. A three-hour film due to start in May is "Bluegrass," from 20th Fox TV.

New mini just firmed is the four-hour "Muppetamia," from Jim Henson Prods. Writers are Andy Borowitz and Henry Beard.

Other minis on the CBS boards are "Saigon," a six-to-eight hour longie from Landsburg Prods., with a tentative start in November; "If Tomorrow Comes," seven-hour in-house show scripted by Carmen Culver, and the six-hour "Frank Sinatra Story," from Warner Bros. CBS tv films currently in production are "Welcome Home, Bobby," starring Tony Lo Bianco, and "Reason Of Insanity."

LBS Takes Over

(Continued from page 70)

fect covering the first year's production cost. LBS will clear stations in the rest of the country and line up national advertisers for the three barter minutes.

Production of "It's A Living" starts in June at the Sunset Gower Studios in Los Angeles, with Ann Jillian and Marian Mercer as the stars. The show is about a group of waitresses who work at a posh restaurant.

Cox Bid

(Continued from page 47)

be worth as much as \$105-\$120 a share.

As to what the family plans to do with the stock, there was no material clue, although there also was speculation the family might have a future sale of the company in mind.

The tender offer is scheduled to begin Friday (12) with the usual 20 days in which to sell the stock at the tender offer price.

The family buyers also noted there should be little difficulty in getting the FCC to agree to the stock buy because the buyers currently control the company and its licenses.

Multimedia Offer

(Continued from page 73)

Multimedia; and other investors to be organized by Goldman Sachs & Co.

The execs say they hope the new offer will obviate four class-action suits alleging that the earlier buyout proposal was too low.

In addition to the newspapers, Multimedia owns five tv stations (WLWT Cincinnati, KSDK St. Louis, WZTV Nashville, WBIR Knoxville and WMAZ Macon), 12 radio stations, close to 100 cable-tv systems and a production house responsible for the syndicated strips "Donahue" and "The Sally Jessy Raphael Show" and for a number of country-music tv series and specials.

Richmond, Va. — Cory Shields will join Deborah Tompkins as coanchor of the 6 and 11 p.m. weekend news on WXEX-TV here starting April 20.

KABC TALKRADIO ALUMNI: WHERE ARE YOU?

We're trying to find our former employees—anyone who's worked at KABC Talkradio since 1969. Whether you worked in front of the mike or anywhere behind the scenes, we want to talk with you about KABC Talkradio's past. So, if you'd like to help us celebrate our 25th anniversary, give us a call. Your reminiscences could end up on the air. Please call the Programming Dept. (213) 557-7257.

KABC TALKRADIO AM 790

PRODUCER / ACCOUNT EXEC.

Young enthusiastic, innovative, state-of-the-art company in sunny So. Florida with everything from helicopters to Rank Cintel, and digital effects, needs self-motivated, imaginative producers/account executives. Fantastic potential. Draw against commission.

Contact: MARK III PRODUCTIONS (305) 948-4336

TV-FILM CRITICS:

Editorial internships available immediately with credits group reporting on Television, Film and Video, for newspapers, magazines, books and broadcast media. Non-salaried position. Send resume and writing samples to:

Editorial Director TV KEY, rm. #1118 25 West 43rd Street, New York City 10018 or phone John Gaudas or Daniel Cook at (212) 575-1722

DISTRIBUTOR WANTED

Independent production company with recently completed childrens fantasy TV Pilot seeks distributor.

Reply to: Box V 7225, Variety 154 W. 46 St. N.Y.C. N.Y. 10036

An Inside Look at the Business, the Personalities, the Future of the Fastest Growing Trend in Television Today.

LIVE FROM N.Y. . . .



In cooperation with N.Y. T.V. Academy

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 10 am-5 pm.

PARTICIPANTS:

- Martha Quinn, V.J. MTV
- Bob Pittman, Chief Operating Officer & Exec. V.P., MTV
- Bob Giraldi, Director of Michael Jackson's "Beat It"
- Ken Walz, Producer, Cyndi Lauper
- Martin Kahan, Director "Kool and the Gang"
- Bob Small, Pres. Robert Small Enterprises
- George Back, Pres., All American Television
- Bunny Freidus, V.P. of Columbia Records Int'l
- Pia Lindstrom, commentator, NBC TV.

VIEW

Large screen projection of current music videos

THE NEW SCHOOL
 66 West 12th Street New York, N.Y. 10011

Register Today for Course #A0039A
 For registration information call (212) 741-5690
 Tuition: \$60. Master Card/VISA accepted.
 For more information call Mary Blake
 (212) 741-8903